A MEMIC Minute:
Ladder Safety

According to the Consumer Product Safety Council, each year there are more than 164,000 emergency room-treated injuries in the U.S. relating to ladders. Here is a review of the various ladder types and some ladder safety fundamentals.

Be sure to choose a ladder that is rated appropriately for the intended load. There are five ladder Duty Ratings:

- Type IAA (Extra Heavy Duty) 375 pounds
- Type IA (Extra Heavy Duty) 300 pounds
- Type I (Heavy Duty) 250 pounds
- Type II (Medium Duty) 225 pounds
- Type III (Light Duty) 200 pounds

All ladders must be inspected before each use for serviceable condition. The manufacturer will define what is considered serviceable condition in the user's manual. Ladders must be set up properly in order to provide a stable work platform. By setting up the ladder properly, you reduce the chance the ladder will fail or move unexpectedly.

Stepladders:

- Must be used in the fully extended position with all four feet supported and the arms locked.
- Face the ladder when ascending or descending.
- Unless otherwise stated in the manufacturer's instructions, the user must not stand on or above the second to last step.

Extension ladders:

- Extension ladders must be set up at the proper angle of 75 ½ degrees. A simple rule for setting-up the ladder at the proper angle is to place the base a distance from the wall or upper support equal to one-quarter of the extended length of the ladder side rails (a 4:1 ratio). The ladder must also be secured from sliding at the top or kicking out at the base.
- Extend the top of the ladder at least 3' above the landing.
- Never carry anything up or down a ladder that could cause a loss of balance.
- Always be aware of overhead electrical wires and remain a safe distance away. Carry ladders horizontally.

While using any ladder, don't overreach. Always keep your center of mass (belly button) between the ladder rails. These are only a few of the rules and guidelines for proper ladder use. For more detailed information and training resources check out the following links:

OSHA Construction E-Tool
American Ladder Institute
OSHA Ladder Safety Quick Card

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